

THE EXALTED

by L. Sprague de Camp

THE STORK-LI-KE MAN WITH THE GRAY GO-ATEE SHUF-FLED THE TWEL-VE black bil-lets abo-ut on the tab-le top. “Try it aga-in,” he sa-id.

The un-derg-ra-du-ate sig-hed. “O. K., Pro-fes-sor Met-hu-en.” He lo-oked ap-pre-hen-si-vely at Johnny Black, sit-ting ac-ross the tab-le with one claw on the but-ton of the stop clock. Johnny re-tur-ned the lo-ok im-pas-si-vely thro-ugh the spec-tac-les perc-hed on his yel-lo-wish muz-zle.

“Go,” sa-id Ira Met-hu-en.

Johnny dep-res-sed the but-ton. The un-derg-ra-du-ate star-ted the se-cond run of his wig-gly-block test. The twel-ve bil-lets for-med a kind of three-di-men-si-onal jig-saw puz-zle; when as-semb-led they wo-uld ma-ke a cu-be. But the block had ori-gi-nal-ly be-en sawn apart on wavy, ir-re-gu-lar li-nes, so that the twel-ve bil-lets had to be put to-get-her just so.

The un-derg-ra-du-ate fid-dled with the bil-lets, trying this one and that one aga-inst one he held in his hand. The clock tic-ked ro-und. In fo-ur mi-nu-tes he had all but one in pla-ce. This one, a cor-ner pi-ece, simply wo-uld not fit. The un-derg-ra-du-ate wig-gled it and pus-hed it. He lo-oked at it clo-sely and tri-ed aga-in. But its ma-la-dj-ust-ment re-ma-ined.

The un-derg-ra-du-ate ga-ve up. “What’s the trick?” he as-ked.

Methuen re-ver-sed the bil-let end for end. It fit-ted.

“Oh, heck,” sa-id the un-derg-ra-du-ate. “I co-uld ha-ve got-ten it if it hadn’t be-en for Johnny.”

Instead of be-ing an-no-yed, Johnny Black twitc-hed his mo-uth in a be-ar’s equ-iva-lent of a grin. Met-hu-en as-ked the stu-dent why.

“He dist-racts me so-me-how. I know he’s fri-endly and all that, but... it’s this way, sort of. He-re I co-me to Ya-le to get to be a psycho-lo-gist. I he-ar all abo-ut tes-ting ani-mals, chimps and be-ars and such. And when I get he-re I find a be-ar tes-ting *me*. It’s kind of up-set-ting.”

“That’s all right,” sa-id Met-hu-en. “Just what we wan-ted. We’re af-ter, not yo-ur wig-gly-block sco-re by it-self, but the ef-fect of Johnny’s pre-sen-ce on pe-op-le ta-king the test. We’re get-ting Johnny’s dist-rac-ti-on fac-tor—his abi-lity to dist-ract pe-op-le. We’re al-so get-ting the dist-rac-ti-on fac-tor of a lot of ot-her things, such as va-ri-o-us so-unds and smells. I didn’t tell you so-oner be-ca-use the know-led-ge might ha-ve af-fec-ted yo-ur per-for-man-ce.”

“I see. Do I still get my fi-ve bucks?”

“Of co-ur-se. Go-od day, Kite-hell. Co-me on, Johnny; we’ve just got ti-me to ma-ke Psycho-bi-ology 100. We’ll cle-an up the stuff la-ter,”

On the way out of Met-hu-en’s of-fi-ce, Johnny as-ked: “Hey, boss! Do you fe-er any ef-fec’ yet?”

“Not a bit,” sa-id Met-hu-en. “I think my ori-gi-nal the-ory was right: that the elect-ri-cal re-sis-tan-ce of the gaps bet-we-en hu-man ne-urons is al-re-ady as low as it can be, so the Met-hu-en inj-ec-ti-ons won’t ha-ve any ap-pre-ci-ab-le ef-fect on a hu-man be-ing. Sorry, Johnny, but I’m af-ra-id yo-ur boss won’t be-co-me any gre-at ge-ni-us as a re-sult of trying a do-se of his own me-di-ci-ne.”

The Met-hu-en tre-at-ment had ra-ised Johnny’s in-tel-li-gen-ce from that of a nor-mal black be-ar to that of—or mo-re exactly to the equ-iva-lent of that of—a hu-man be-ing. It had enab-led him to carry out tho-se spec-ta-cu-lar co-ups in the Vir-gin Is-lands and the Cent-ral Park Zoo. It had al-so wor-ked on a num-ber of ot-her ani-mals in the sa-id zoo, with reg-ret-tab-le re-sults.

Johnny grumb-led in his ur-so-Ame-ri-can ac-cent: “Stirr, I don’t sink it is smart to te-ach a crass when you are furr of zat stuff. You ne-ver know—”

But they had ar-ri-ved. The class comp-ri-sed a hand-ful of gra-ve gra-du-ate stu-dents, on whom Johnny’s dist-rac-ti-on fac-tor had lit-tle ef-fect.

Ira Met-hu-en was not a go-od lec-tu-rer. He put in too many uh’s and er’s, and ten-ded to mumb-le.

Be-si-des, Psycho-bi-ology 100 was an ele-men-tary sur-vey, and Johnny was pretty well up in the fi-eld him-self. So he set-tled him-self to a vi-ew of the Gro-ve Stre-et Ce-me-tery ac-ross the stre-et, and to me-lanc-holy ref-lec-ti-ons on the short li-fe span of his spe-ci-es com-pa-red with that of men.

“Ouch!”

R. H. Wim-pus, B.S., ‘68, jer-ked his back-bo-ne from its nor-mal-ly nonc-ha-lant arc in-to a qu-ive-ring ref-lex cur-ve. His eyes we-re wi-de with mu-te in-dig-na-ti-on.

Methuen was sa-ying: “—whe-re-upon it was dis-co-ve-red that the... uh... pa-raly-sis of the pes re-sul-ting from ex-ci-si-on of the cor-res-pon-ding mo-tor area of the cor-tex was much mo-re las-ting among the Si-mi-idae than among the ot-her ca-tar-rhi-ne pri-ma-tes; that it was mo-re las-ting among the-se than among the platyr-rhi-nes—Mr. Wim-pus?”

“Nothing,” sa-id Wim-pus. “I’m sorry.”

“And that the platyr-rhi-nes, in turn, suf-fe-red mo-re than the le-mu-ro-ids and tar-si-o-ids. When—”

“Unh!” Anot-her gra-du-ate stu-dent jer-ked up-right. Whi-le Met-hu-en pa-used with his mo-uth open, a third man pic-ked a small obj-ect off the flo-or and held it up.

“Really, gent-le-men,” sa-id Met-hu-en, “I tho-ught you’d outg-rown such amu-se-ments as sho-oting rub-ber bands at each ot-her. As I was sa-ying when—”

Wimpus ga-ve anot-her grunt and jerk. He gla-red abo-ut him. Met-hu-en tri-ed to get his lec-tu-re go-ing aga-in. But, as rub-ber bands from now-he-re con-ti-nu-ed to sting the necks and ears of the lis-te-ners, the clas-sro-om or-ga-ni-za-ti-on vi-sibly di-sin-teg-ra-ted li-ke a lump of su-gar in a cup of we-ak tea.

Johnny had put on his spec-tac-les and was pe-ering abo-ut the ro-om. But he was no mo-re suc-ces-sful than the ot-hers in lo-ca-ting the so-ur-ce of the bom-bard-ment.

He slid off his cha-ir and shuf-fled over to the light switch. The day-light thro-ugh the win-dows left the re-ar end of the clas-sro-om dark. As so-on as the lights went on, the so-ur-ce of the elas-tics was ob-vi-o-us. A co-up-le of the gra-du-ates po-un-ced on a small wo-oden box on the shelf be-si-de the pro-j-ec-tor.

The box ga-ve out a fa-int whir, and spat rub-ber bands thro-ugh a slit, one every few se-conds. They bro-ught it up and ope-ned it on Met-hu-en’s lec-tu-re tab-le. In-si-de was a mass of mac-hi-nery ap-pa-rently ma-de of the parts of a co-up-le of alarm clocks and a lot of hand-whit-tled wo-oden cams and things.

“My, my,” sa-id Met-hu-en. “A most in-ge-ni-o-us cont-rap-ti-on, isn’t it?”

The mac-hi-ne ran down with a click. Whi-le they we-re still exa-mi-ning it, the bell rang.

Methuen lo-oked out the win-dow. A Sep-tem-ber ra-in was co-ming up. Ira Met-hu-en pul-led on his top-co-at and his rub-bers and to-ok his umb-rel-la from the cor-ner. He ne-ver wo-re a hat. He went out and he-aded down Pros-pect Stre-et, Johnny pad-ding be-hind.

“Hi!” sa-id a yo-ung man, a fat yo-ung man in ne-ed of a ha-ir-cut. “Got any news for us, Pro-fes-sor Met-hu-en?”

“I’m af-ra-id not, Bru-ce,” rep-li-ed Met-hu-en. “Unless you call Ford’s gi-ant mo-use news.”

“What? What gi-ant mo-use?”

“Dr. Ford has pro-du-ced a three-hund-red-po-und mo-use by ort-ho-go-nal mu-ta-ti-on. He had to al-ter its morp-ho-lo-gi-cal cha-rac-te-ris-tics—”

“Its *what?*”

“Its sha-pe, to you. He had to al-ter it to ma-ke it pos-sib-le for it to li-ve—”

“Where? Whe-re is it?”

“Osborn Labs. If—” But Bru-ce Ing-le-hart was go-ne up the hill to-ward the sci-en-ce bu-il-dings. Met-hu-en con-ti-nu-ed: “With no war on, and New Ha-ven as de-ad a town as it al-ways has be-en, they ha-ve to co-me to us for news, I sup-po-se. Co-me on, Johnny. Get-ting gar-ru-lo-us in my old age.”

A pas-sing dog went crazy at the sight of Johnny, snar-ling and yel-ping. Johnny ig-no-red it. They en-te-red Wo-odb-rid-ge Hall.

Dr. Wen-dell Co-ok, pre-si-dent of Ya-le Uni-ver-sity, had Met-hu-en sent in at on-ce. Johnny,

exc-lu-ded from the sanc-tum, went up to the pre-si-dent's sec-re-tary. He sto-od up and put his paws on her desk. He le-ered—you ha-ve to see a be-ar le-er to know how it is do-ne—and sa-id: "How abo-ut it, kid?"

Miss Pres-cott, an un-mis-ta-kab-le Bos-ton spins-ter, smi-led at him. "Sut-tinly, Johnny. Just a mo-ment." She fi-nis-hed typing a let-ter, ope-ned a dra-wer, and to-ok out a copy of Hecht's "Fan-ta-zi-us Mal-la-re." This she ga-ve Johnny. He cur-led up on the flo-or, adj-us-ted his glas-ses, and re-ad.

After a whi-le he lo-oked up, sa-ying: "Miss Pres-cott, I am half-way sro-ugh zis, and I stirr don't see why zey cawr it obs-ce-ne. I sink it is just durr. Can't you get me a *re-ar-ry* dirty bo-ok?"

"Well, re-al-ly, Johnny, I don't run a por-nog-raphy shop, you know. Most pe-op-le find that qu-ite strong eno-ugh."

Johnny sig-hed. "Pe-op-re get ex-ci-ted over ze fun-ni-es' sings."

Meanwhile, Met-hu-en was clo-se-ted with Co-ok and Dalrymp-le, the pros-pec-ti-ve en-do-wer, in anot-her of tho-se in-ter-mi-nab-le and in-de-ci-si-ve con-fe-ren-ces. R. Hans-com Dalrymp-le lo-oked li-ke a sta-tue that the sculp-tor had ne-ver got-ten aro-und to fi-nis-hing. The only exp-res-si-on the ste-el cha-ir-man ever al-lo-wed him-self was a canny, sec-re-ti-ve smi-le. Co-ok and Met-hu-en had a fe-eling he was pla-ying them on the end of a long and well-knit fish li-ne ma-de of U. S. Fe-de-ral Re-ser-ve no-tes. It was not be-ca-use he wasn't wil-ling to part with the dam-ned en-dow-ment, but be-ca-use he enj-oyed the sen-sa-ti-on of po-wer over the-se oh-so-edu-ca-ted men. And in the ac-tu-al world, one do-esn't lo-se one's tem-per and tell Cro-esus what to do with his lo-ot. One says: "Yes, Mr. Dalrymp-le. My, my, that *is* a bril-li-ant sug-ges-ti-on, Mr. Dalrymp-le! Why didn't we think of it our-sel-ves?" Co-ok and Met-hu-en we-re both old hands at this ga-me. Met-hu-en, tho-ugh ot-her-wi-se he con-si-de-red Wen-dell Co-ok a pom-po-us ass, ad-mi-red the pre-si-dent's en-dow-ment-sna-g-ging abi-lity. Af-ter all, wasn't Ya-le Uni-ver-sity na-med af-ter a re-ti-red merc-hant on the ba-sis of a gift of fi-ve hund-red and sixty-two po-unds twel-ve shil-lings?

"Say, Dr. Co-ok," sa-id Dalrymp-le, "why don't you co-me over to the Taft and ha-ve lunch on me for a chan-ge? You, too, Pro-fes-sor Met-hu-en."

The aca-de-mics mur-mu-red the-ir de-light and pul-led on the-ir rub-bers. On the way out Dalrymp-le pa-used to scratch Johnny be-hind the ears. Johnny put his bo-ok away, ke-eping the tit-le on the co-ver out of sight, and rest-ra-ined him-self from snap-ping at the ste-el man's hand. Dalrymp-le me-ant well eno-ugh, but Johnny did not li-ke pe-op-le to ta-ke such li-ber-ti-es with his per-son.

So three men and a be-ar slo-ped down Col-le-ge Stre-et. Co-ok pa-used now and then, ig-no-ring the sprink-le, to ma-ke stu-di-ed ges-tu-res to-ward one or anot-her of the units of the gre-at so-uf-flé of Ge-or-gi-an and Col-le-gi-ate Got-hic arc-hi-tec-tu-re. He exp-la-ined this and that. Dalrymp-le me-re-ly smi-led his blank lit-tle smi-le.

Johnny, plod-ding be-hind, was the first to no-ti-ce that pas-sing un-derg-ra-du-ates we-re pa-using to sta-re at the pre-si-dent's fe-et. The word "fe-et" is me-ant li-te-ral-ly. For Co-ok's rub-bers we-re ra-pidly chan-ging in-to a pa-ir of enor-mo-us pink ba-re fe-et.

Cook him-self was qu-ite un-cons-ci-o-us of it, un-til qu-ite a gro-up of un-derg-ra-du-ates had col-lec-ted. The-se ga-ve forth the ca-tar-rhal snorts of men trying un-suc-ces-sful-ly not to la-ugh. By the ti-me Co-ok had fol-lo-wed the-ir sta-res and lo-oked down, the me-ta-morp-ho-sis was comp-le-te. That he sho-uld be start-led was only na-tu-ral. The fe-et we-re start-ling eno-ugh. His fa-ce gra-du-al-ly matc-hed the fe-et in red-ness, ma-king a che-er-ful no-te of co-lor in the gray lands-ca-pe.

R. Hans-com Dalrymp-le lost his re-ser-ve for on-ce. His howls did not-hing to sa-ve prexy's now-apop-lec-tic fa-ce. Co-ok fi-nal-ly sto-oped and pul-led off the rub-bers. It trans-pi-red that the fe-et had be-en pa-in-ted on the out-si-de of the rub-bers and co-ve-red over with lampb-lack. The ra-in had was-hed the lampb-lack off.

Wendell Co-ok re-su-med his walk to the Ho-tel Taft in glo-omy si-len-ce. He held the of-fen-si-ve rub-bers bet-we-en thumb and fin-ger as if they we-re so-met-hing unc-le-an and lo-ath-so-me. He won-de-red who had do-ne this das-tardly de-ed. The-re hadn't be-en any un-derg-ra-du-ates in his

of-fi-ce for so-me days, but you ne-ver wan-ted to un-de-res-ti-ma-te the in-ge-nu-ity of un-derg-ra-du-ates. He no-ti-ced that Ira Met-hu-en was we-ar-ing rub-bers of the sa-me si-ze and ma-ke as his own. But he put sus-pi-ci-on in that di-rec-ti-on out of his mind be-fo-re it had fully for-med. Cer-ta-in-ly Met-hu-en wo-uldn't play prac-ti-cal jokes with Dalrymp-le a-ro-und, when he'd be the he-ad of the new De-part-ment of Bi-ophy-sics when—if—Dalrymp-le ca-me thro-ugh with the en-dow-ment.

The next man to sus-pect that the Ya-le cam-pus was un-der-go-ing a se-ve-re pi-xi-la-ti-on was John Du-gan, the tall thin one of the two cam-pus cops. He was pas-sing Christ Church—which is so veddy high-church Epis-co-pal that they re-fer to Char-les I of Eng-land as St. Char-les the Martyr—on his way to his la-ir in Phelps To-wer. A still small vo-ice spo-ke in his ear: “Be-wa-re, John Du-gan! Yo-ur sins will find you out!”

Dugan jum-ped and lo-oked a-ro-und. The vo-ice re-pe-ated its mes-sa-ge. The-re was no-body wit-hin fifty fe-et of Du-gan. Mo-re-over, he co-uld not think of any re-al-ly se-ri-o-us sins he had com-mit-ted la-tely. The only pe-op-le in sight we-re a few un-derg-ra-du-ates and Pro-fes-sor Met-hu-en's edu-ca-ted black be-ar, tra-iling af-ter his boss as usu-al. The-re was not-hing for John Du-gan to sus-pect but his own sa-ni-ty.

R. Hans-com Dalrymp-le was a bit surp-ri-sed at the grim ear-nest-ness of the pro-fes-sors in put-ting away the-ir res-pec-ti-ve sha-res of the James Pi-er-pont din-ner. They we-re sta-ying the eter-nal gnaw of hun-ger that af-flicts tho-se who de-pend on a col-le-ge com-mis-sary for sus-te-nan-ce. Many of them sus-pec-ted a cons-pi-racy among col-le-ge co-oks to see that the ra-zor ed-ge wasn't ta-ken off stu-dents' and inst-ruc-tors' in-tel-lects by over-fe-ed-ing. They knew that con-di-ti-ons we-re much the sa-me in most col-le-ges.

Dalrymp-le sip-ped his cof-fee and lo-oked at his no-tes. Pre-sen-tly Co-ok wo-uld get up and say a few ple-a-sant not-hings. Then he wo-uld an-no-un-ce Dalrymp-le's en-dow-ment, which was to be spent in bu-il-ding a Dalrymp-le Bi-ophy-si-cal La-bo-ra-tory and set-ting up a new de-part-ment. Every-body wo-uld ap-pla-ud and ag-ree that bi-ophy-sics had flo-ated in the vo-id bet-we-en the do-ma-ins of the de-part-ments of zo-o-logy, psy-cho-logy, and the physi-olo-gi-cal sci-en-ces long eno-ugh. Then Dalrymp-le wo-uld get up and cle-ar his thro-at and say—tho-ugh in much mo-re dig-ni-fi-ed lan-gu-age: “Shucks, fel-las, it re-al-ly isn't not-hing.”

Dr. Wen-dell Co-ok duly got up, be-amed out over the ran-ked shirt fronts, and sa-id his ple-a-sant not-hings. The pro-fes-sors exc-han-ged ner-vo-us lo-oks when he sho-wed signs of go-ing off in-to his fa-vo-ri-te ora-ti-on, the-re-is-no-conf-lict-bet-we-en-sci-en-ce-and-re-li-gi-on. They had he-ard it be-fo-re.

He was well la-unc-hed in-to Ver-si-on 3A of this ho-mily, when he be-gan to turn blue in the fa-ce. It was not the dark purp-lish-gray cal-led lo-osely “blue” that ap-pe-ars on the fa-ces of strang-le-es, but a bright, che-er-ful co-balt. Now, such a co-lor is all very well in a pa-in-ting of a ship sa-iling un-der a cle-ar blue sky, or in the uni-form of a mo-vie-the-ater do-or-man. But it is dis-tinctly out of pla-ce in the fa-ce of a col-le-ge pre-si-dent. Or so felt the pro-fes-sors. They le-aned this way and that, the-ir bo-iled shirts bul-ging, pop-ping and ga-ping as they did so, and whis-pe-red.

Cook frow-ned and con-ti-nu-ed. He was ob-ser-ved to sniff the air as if he smel-led so-met-hing. Tho-se at the spe-akers' tab-le de-tec-ted a slight smell of ace-to-ne. But that se-emed hardly an ade-qu-ate exp-la-na-ti-on of the ro-bin's-egg hue of the-ir prexy's fa-ce. The co-lor was now qu-ite so-lid on the fa-ce pro-per. It ran up in-to the area whe-re Co-ok's ha-ir wo-uld ha-ve be-en if he had had so-me. His col-lar sho-wed a tra-ce of it, too.

Cook, on his part, had no idea of why the mem-bers of his audi-en-ce we-re swa-ying in the-ir se-ats li-ke sap-lings in a ga-le and whis-pe-ring. He tho-ught it very ru-de of them. But his frowns had no ef-fect. So pre-sen-tly he cut Ver-si-on 3A short. He an-no-un-ced the en-dow-ment in con-ci-se, bu-si-nes-s-li-ke terms, and pa-used for the ex-pec-ted thun-der of ap-pla-use.

There was no-ne. To be exact, the-re was a fe-eb-le pat-ter that no-body in his right mind wo-uld call a thun-der of anyt-hing.

Cook lo-oked at R. Hans-com Dalrymp-le, ho-ping that the ste-el man wo-uld not be in-sul-ted. Dalrymp-le's fa-ce sho-wed not-hing. Co-ok as-su-med that this was part of his ge-ne-ral re-ser-ve. The truth was that Dalrymp-le was too cu-ri-o-us abo-ut the blue fa-ce to no-ti-ce the lack of ap-pla-use. When Co-ok int-ro-du-ced him to the audi-en-ce, it to-ok him so-me se-conds to pull him-self to-get-her.

He star-ted rat-her la-mely: "Gent-le-men and mem-bers of the Ya-le fa-culty... uh... I me-an, of co-ur-se, you're *all* gen-t-le-men... I am re-min-ded of a story abo-ut the po-ultry far-mer who got mar-ri-ed—I me-an, I'm not re-min-ded of *that* story, but the one abo-ut the di-vi-nity stu-dent who di-ed and went to—" He-re Dalrymp-le ca-ught the eye of the de-an of the di-vi-nity scho-ol. He tac-ked aga-in: "May-be I'd... uh... bet-ter tell the one abo-ut the Scotch-man who got lost on his way ho-me and—"

It was not a bad story, as such things go. But it got prac-ti-cal-ly no la-ugh-ter. Ins-te-ad, the pro-fes-sors be-gan swa-ying, li-ke a ro-om-ful of bo-iled-shir-ted Eas-tern as-ce-tics at the-ir pra-yers, and whis-pe-ring aga-in.

Dalrymple co-uld put two and two to-get-her. He le-aned over and his-sed in-to Co-ok's ear: "Is the-re anyt-hing wrong with me?"

"Yes, yo-ur fa-ce has tur-ned gre-en."

"Green?"

"Bright gre-en. Li-ke grass. Ni-ce yo-ung grass."

"Well, you might li-ke to know that yo-urs is blue."

Both men felt the-ir fa-ces. The-re was no do-ubt; they we-re mas-ked with co-at-ings of so-me sort of pa-int, still wet.

Dalrymple whis-pe-red: "What kind of gag is this?"

"I don't know. Bet-ter fi-nish yo-ur spe-ech."

Dalrymple tri-ed. But his tho-ughts we-re scat-te-red be-yond re-co-very. He ma-de a few re-marks abo-ut how glad he was to be the-re amid the elms and ivy and tra-di-ti-ons of old Eli, and sat down. His fa-ce lo-oked ro-ug-her-hewn than ever. If a joke had be-en pla-yed on him—well, he hadn't sig-ned any checks yet.

The li-e-ute-nant go-ver-nor of the Sta-te of Con-nec-ti-cut was next on the list. Co-ok shot a qu-es-ti-on at him. He mumb-led: "But if I'm go-ing to turn a funny co-lor when I get up—"

The qu-es-ti-on of whet-her his ho-nor sho-uld spe-ak was ne-ver sa-tis-fac-to-rily set-tled. For at that mo-ment a thing ap-pe-ared on one end of the spe-akers' tab-le. It was a be-ast the si-ze of a St. Ber-nard. It lo-oked rat-her the way a com-mon bat wo-uld lo-ok if, ins-te-ad of wings, it had arms with disk-sha-ped pads on the ends of the fin-gers. Its eyes we-re as big a-ro-und as lunc-he-on pla-tes.

There was com-mo-ti-on. The spe-aker sit-ting ne-arest the thing fell over back-ward. The li-e-ute-nant go-ver-nor cros-sed him-self. An Eng-lish zo-olo-gist put on his glas-ses and sa-id: "By Jove, a spect-ral tar-si-er! But a bit lar-ge, what?"

A na-tu-ral-si-zed tar-si-er wo-uld fit in yo-ur hand com-for-tably, and is rat-her cu-te if a bit spo-oky. But a tar-si-er the si-ze of this one is not the kind of thing one can glan-ce at and then go on re-ading the ad-ven-tu-res of Al-ley Oop. It bre-aks one's tra-in of tho-ught. It dis-con-certs one. It may gi-ve one the scre-am-ing me-emi-es.

This tar-si-er wal-ked gra-vely down the twenty fe-et of tab-le. The di-ners we-re too busy go-ing away from the-re to ob-ser-ve that it up-set no tumb-lers and kic-ked no asht-rays abo-ut; that it was, in fact, slightly trans-pa-rent. At the ot-her end of the tab-le it va-nis-hed.

Johnny Black's cu-ri-osity wrest-led with his bet-ter judg-ment. His cu-ri-osity told him that all the-se odd hap-pe-nings had ta-ken pla-ce in the pre-sen-ce of Ira Met-hu-en. The-re-fo-re, Ira Met-hu-en was at le-ast a pro-mi-sing sus-pect. "So what?" sa-id his bet-ter judg-ment. "He's the only man you ha-ve a re-al af-fec-ti-on for. If you le-ar-ned that he was the pi-xie in the ca-se, you wo-uldn't ex-po-se him, wo-uld you? Bet-ter ke-ep yo-ur muz-zle out of this."

But in the end his cu-ri-osity won, as usu-al. The won-der was that his bet-ter judg-ment kept on

trying.

He got hold of Bru-ce Ing-le-hart. The yo-ung re-por-ter had a re-pu-ta-ti-on for disc-re-ti-on.

Johnny exp-la-ined: “He ga-ve him-serf ze Mes-su-en tre-at-ment—you know, ze spi-nar inj-ec-ti-on—to see what it wo-uld do to a man. Zat was a we-ek ago. Sho-uld ha-ve wor-ked by now. But he says it had no ef-fec’. May-be not. But day af-ter ze do-se, awr ze-se sings start hap-pe-ning. Very era-bo-ra-te jokes. Kind a crazy sci-en-ti-fic ge-ni-us wo-uld do. If it’s him, I mus’ stop him be-fo-re he ma-kes re-ar tro-ub-re. You wirr he’p me?”

“Sure, Johnny. Sha-ke on it.” Johnny ex-ten-ded his paw.

It was two nights la-ter that Dur-fee Hall ca-ught fi-re. Ya-le had be-en dis-cus-sing the era-su-re of this sin-gu-larly ugly and use-less bu-il-ding for forty ye-ars. It had be-en va-cant for so-me ti-me, ex-cept for the bur-sar’s of-fi-ce in the ba-se-ment.

About ten o’clock an un-derg-ra-du-ate no-ti-ced lit-tle red ton-gu-es of fla-me craw-ling up the ro-of. He ga-ve the alarm at on-ce. The New Ha-ven fi-re de-part-ment was not to be bla-med for the fact that the fi-re spre-ad as fast as if the bu-il-ding had be-en so-aked in ke-ro-se-ne. By the ti-me they, and abo-ut a tho-usand spec-ta-tors, had ar-ri-ved, the who-le cen-ter of the bu-il-ding was go-ing up with a fi-ne ro-ar and crack-le. The as-sis-tant bur-sar bra-vely das-hed in-to the bu-il-ding and re-ap-pe-ared with an arm-ful of pa-pers, which la-ter tur-ned out to be a pi-le of qu-ite use-less exa-mi-na-ti-on forms. The fi-re de-part-ment squ-ir-ted eno-ugh wa-ter on-to the bur-ning sec-ti-on to put out Mo-unt Ve-su-vi-us. So-me of them clim-bed lad-ders at the ends of the bu-il-ding to chop ho-les in the ro-of.

The wa-ter se-emed to ha-ve no ef-fect. So the fi-re de-part-ment cal-led for so-me mo-re ap-pa-ra-tus, con-nec-ted up mo-re ho-ses, and squ-ir-ted mo-re wa-ter. The un-derg-ra-du-ates yel-led:

“Rah, rah, fi-re de-part-ment! Rah, rah, fi-re! Go get ‘em, de-part-ment! Hold that li-ne, fi-re!”

Johnny Black bum-ped in-to Bru-ce Ing-le-hart, who was dod-ging abo-ut in the crowd with a pad and pen-cil, trying to get in-for-ma-ti-on for his New Ha-ven *Co-uri-er*. In-g-le-hart as-ked Johnny whet-her he knew anyt-hing.

Johnny, in his de-li-be-ra-te man-ner, sa-id: “I know one sing. Zat is ze firs’ het-ress fi-re I ha-ve se-en.”

Inglehart lo-oked at Johnny, then at the conf-lag-ra-ti-on. “My gosh!” he sa-id. “We ought to fe-el the ra-di-ati-on he-re, oughtn’t we? He-at-less fi-re is right. Anot-her su-pers-ci-en-ti-fic joke, you sup-po-se?”

“We can ro-ok aro-und,” sa-id Johnny. Tur-ning the-ir backs on the conf-lag-ra-ti-on, they be-gan se-arc-hing among the shrub-bery and ra-ilings along Elm Stre-et.

“Woof!” sa-id Johnny. “Co-me he-re, Bru-ce!”

In a patch of sha-dow sto-od Pro-fes-sor Ira Met-hu-en and a tri-pod whe-re-on was mo-un-ted a mo-ti-on-pic-tu-re pro-j-ec-tor. It to-ok Johnny a se-cond to dis-tin-gu-ish which was which.

Methuen se-emed une-asily po-ised on the ver-ge of flight. He sa-id: “Why, hel-lo, Johnny, why aren’t you as-le-ep? I just fo-und this... uh... this pro-j-ec-tor—”

Johnny, thin-king fast, slap-ped the pro-j-ec-tor with his paw. Met-hu-en ca-ught it as it top-pled. Its whir ce-ased. At the sa-me ins-tant the fi-re went out, va-nis-hed ut-terly. The ro-ar and crack-le still ca-me from the pla-ce whe-re the fi-re had be-en. But the-re was no fi-re. The-re was not even a bur-ned pla-ce in the ro-of, off which gal-lons of wa-ter we-re still po-uring. The fi-re de-part-ment lo-oked at one anot-her fo-olishly.

While Johnny’s and Ing-le-hart’s pu-pils we-re still ex-pan-ding in the sud-den dark-ness, Met-hu-en and his pro-j-ec-tor va-nis-hed. They got a glimp-se of him gal-lo-ping aro-und the Col-le-ge Stre-et co-mer, lug-ging the tri-pod. They ran af-ter him. A few un-derg-ra-du-ates ran af-ter Johnny and Ing-le-hart, be-ing mo-ved by the ins-tinct that ma-kes dogs cha-se auto-mo-bi-les.

They ca-ught sight of Met-hu-en, lost him, and ca-ught sight of him aga-in. Ing-le-hart was not bu-ilt for run-ning, and Johnny’s eye-sight was an af-fa-ir of li-mi-ted obj-ec-ti-ves. Johnny ope-ned up when

it be-ca-me evi-dent that Met-hu-en was he-ading for the old Phelps man-si-on, whe-re he, Johnny, and se-ve-ral un-mar-ri-ed inst-ruc-tors li-ved. Every-body in the ho-use had go-ne to see the fi-re. Met-hu-en das-hed in the front do-or three jumps ahe-ad of Johnny and slam-med it in the be-ar's fa-ce.

Johnny pad-ded aro-und in the dark with the idea of at-tac-king a win-dow. But whi-le he was ma-king up his mind, so-met-hing hap-pe-ned to the front steps un-der him. They be-ca-me slic-ker than the smo-ot-hest ice. Down the steps went Johnny, *bump-bump-bump*.

Johnny pic-ked him-self up in no ple-asant mo-od. So this was the sort of tre-at-ment he got from the one man—But then, he ref-lec-ted, if Met-hu-en was re-al-ly crazy, you co-uldn't bla-me him.

Some of the un-derg-ra-du-ates ca-ught up with them. The-se crow-ded to-ward the man-si-on—until the-ir fe-et went out from un-der them as if they we-re we-aring in-vi-sib-le rol-ler ska-tes. They tri-ed to get up, and fell aga-in, sli-ding down the slight gra-de of the crown of the ro-ad in-to he-aps in the gut-ter. They re-ti-red on hands and kne-es, the-ir clot-hes sho-wing lar-ge ho-les.

A po-li-ce car dro-ve up and tri-ed to stop. Ap-pa-rently ne-it-her bra-kes nor ti-res wo-uld hold. It skid-ded abo-ut, ban-ged aga-inst the curb on-ce, and fi-nal-ly stop-ped down the stre-et be-yond the slip-pery zo-ne. The cop—he was a fa-irly im-por-tant cop, a cap-ta-in—got out and char-ged the man-si-on.

He fell down, too. He tri-ed to ke-ep go-ing on hands and kne-es. But every ti-me he ap-pli-ed a ho-ri-zon-tal com-po-nent of for-ce to a hand or knee, the hand or knee simply slid back-ward. The sight re-min-ded Johnny of the ef-forts of tho-se gar-ter sna-kes to crawl on the smo-oth conc-re-te flo-or of the Cent-ral Park Zoo mon-key ho-use.

When the po-li-ce cap-ta-in ga-ve up and tri-ed to ret-re-at, the laws of fric-ti-on ca-me back on. But when he sto-od up, all his clot-hes be-low the wa-ist, ex-cept his sho-es, di-sin-teg-ra-ted in-to a clo-ud of tex-ti-le fi-bers.

“My word!” sa-id the Eng-lish zo-olo-gist, who had just ar-ri-ved. “Just li-ke one of tho-se Et-rus-can sta-tu-es, don't you know!”

The po-li-ce cap-ta-in baw-led at Bru-ce Ing-le-hart: “Hey, you, for gos-sa-kes gim-mie a hand-kerc-hi-ef!”

“What's the mat-ter; got a cold?” as-ked Ing-le-hart in-no-cently.

“No, you do-pe! You know what I want it for!”

Inglehart sug-ges-ted that a bet-ter idea wo-uld be for the cap-ta-in to use his co-at as an ap-ron. Whi-le the cap-ta-in was knot-ting the sle-eves be-hind his back, Ing-le-hart and Johnny exp-la-ined the-ir ver-si-on of the si-tu-a-ti-on to him.

“Hm-m-m,” sa-id the cap-ta-in. “We don't want no-body to get hurt, or the pla-ce to get da-ma-ged. But sup-po-se he's got a de-ath ray or sumpm?”

“I don't sink so,” sa-id Johnny. “He has not hurt any-body. Jus' pra-yed jokes.”

The cap-ta-in tho-ught for a few se-conds of rin-ging up he-ad-qu-ar-ters and ha-ving them send an emer-gency truck. But the cre-dit for over-po-we-ring a dan-ge-ro-us ma-ni-ac sing-le-han-ded was too temp-ting. He sa-id: “How'll we get in-to the pla-ce, if he can ma-ke everyt-hing so slip-pery?”

They tho-ught. Johnny sa-id: “Can you get one of zo-se sings wiss a wo-od stick and a rub-ber cup on end?”

The cap-ta-in frow-ned. Johnny ma-de mo-ti-ons. Ing-le-hart sa-id: “Oh, you me-an the plum-ber's fri-end! Su-re. You wa-it. I'll get one. See if you can find a key to the pla-ce.”

The as-sa-ult on Met-hu-en's strong-hold was ma-de on all fo-urs. The cap-ta-in, in front, jam-med the end of the plum-ber's fri-end aga-inst the ri-se of the lo-west front step. If Met-hu-en co-uld abo-lish fric-ti-on, he had not dis-co-ve-red how to get rid of ba-ro-met-ric pres-su-re. The rub-ber cup held, and the cop pul-led him-self, Ing-le-hart and Johnny af-ter him. By using the inst-ru-ment on suc-ces-si-ve steps, they mo-un-ted them. Then the cap-ta-in anc-ho-red them to the front do-or and pul-led them up to it. He ha-uled him-self to his fe-et by the do-or hand-le, and ope-ned the do-or with a key bor-ro-wed from Dr. Wen-dell Co-ok.

At one win-dow, Met-hu-en cro-uc-hed be-hind a thing li-ke a sur-ve-yor's tran-sit. He swi-ve-led the thing to-ward them, and ma-de adj-ust-ments. The cap-ta-in and Ing-le-hart, fe-eling the-ir sho-es grip the flo-or, gat-he-red them-sel-ves to jump. But Met-hu-en got the cont-rap-ti-on go-ing, and the-ir fe-et went out from un-der them.

Johnny used his he-ad. He was stan-ding next to the do-or. He lay down, bra-ced his hind fe-et aga-ainst the do-or fra-me, and kic-ked out. His body whiz-zed ac-ross the fric-ti-on-less flo-or and bow-led over Met-hu-en and his cont-rap-ti-on.

The pro-fes-sor of-fe-red no mo-re re-sis-tan-ce. He se-emed mo-re amu-sed than anyt-hing, des-pi-te the lump that was gro-wing on his fo-re-he-ad. He sa-id: "My, my, you fel-lows *are* per-sis-tent. I sup-po-se you're go-ing to ta-ke me off to so-me asy-lum. I tho-ught you and you"—he in-di-ca-ted Ing-le-hart and John-ny—"we-re fri-ends of mi-ne. Oh, well, it do-esn't mat-ter."

The cap-ta-in grow-led: "What did you do to my pants?"

"Simple. My te-le-lub-ri-ca-tor he-re ne-ut-ra-li-zes the in-te-ra-to-mic bonds on the sur-fa-ce of any so-lid on which the be-am falls. So the sur-fa-ce, to a depth of a few mo-le-cu-les, is put in the con-di-ti-on of a su-per-co-oled li-qu-id as long as the be-am is fo-cu-sed on it. Sin-ce the li-qu-id form of any com-po-und will wet the so-lid form, you ha-ve per-fect lub-ri-ca-ti-on."

"But my pants—"

"They we-re held to-get-her by fric-ti-on bet-we-en the fi-bers, we-ren't they? And I ha-ve a lot mo-re in-ven-ti-ons li-ke that. My soft-spe-aker and my three-di-men-si-onal pro-j-ec-tor, for ins-tan-ce, are—"

Inglehart in-ter-rup-ted: "Is that how you ma-de that phony fi-re, and that whatc-ha-ma-cal-lit that sca-red the pe-op-le at the din-ner? With a three-di-men-si-onal pro-j-ec-tor?"

"Yes, of co-ur-se, tho-ugh, to be exact, it to-ok two pro-j-ec-tors at right ang-les, and a pho-nog-raph and amp-li-fi-er to gi-ve the so-und ef-fect. It was amu-sing, wasn't it?"

"But," wa-iled Johnny, "why do you *do ze-se* sings? You trying to ru-in yo-ur ca-re-er?"

Methuen shrug-ged. "It do-esn't mat-ter. Not-hing mat-ters. Johnny, as you'd know if you we-re in my... uh... con-di-ti-on. And now, gent-le-men, whe-re do you want me to go? Whe-re-ver it is, I'll find so-met-hing amu-sing the-re."

Dr. Wen-dell Co-ok vi-si-ted Ira Met-hu-en on the first day of his in-car-ce-ra-ti-on in the New Ha-ven Hos-pi-tal. In or-di-nary con-ver-sa-ti-on Met-hu-en se-emed sa-ne eno-ugh, and qu-ite ag-re-e-ab-le. He re-adily ad-mit-ted that he had be-en the one res-pon-sib-le for the jokes. He exp-la-ined: "I pa-in-ted yo-ur and Dalrymp-le's fa-ce with a high-po-we-red ne-ed-le spra-yer I in-ven-ted. It's a most amu-sing lit-tle thing. Fits in yo-ur hand and disc-har-ges thro-ugh a ring on yo-ur fin-ger. With yo-ur thumb you can re-gu-la-te the amo-unt of ace-to-ne mi-xed in with the wa-ter, which in turn cont-rols the sur-fa-ce ten-si-on and the-re-fo-re the po-int at which the ne-ed-le spray bre-aks up in-to drop-lets. I ma-de the spray bre-ak up just be-fo-re it re-ac-hed yo-ur fa-ce. You we-re a sight, Co-ok, es-pe-ci-al-ly when you fo-und out what was wrong with you. You lo-oked al-most as funny as the day I pa-in-ted tho-se fe-et on my rub-bers and subs-ti-tu-ted them for yo-urs. You re-act so be-a-uti-ful-ly to ha-ving yo-ur dig-nity pric-ked. You al-ways we-re a pom-po-us ass, you know."

Cook puf-fed out his che-eks and cont-rol-led him-self. Af-ter all, the po-or man was mad. The-se ab-surd out-bursts abo-ut Co-ok's pom-po-us-ness pro-ved it. He sa-id sadly: "Dalrymp-le's le-aving to-mor-row night. He was most disp-le-ased abo-ut the fa-ce-pa-in-ting epi-so-de, and when he fo-und that you we-re un-der ob-ser-va-ti-on, he told me that no use-ful pur-po-se wo-uld be ser-ved by his re-ma-ining he-re. I'm af-ra-id that's the end of our en-dow-ment. Un-less you can pull yo-ur-self to-get-her and tell us what's hap-pe-ned to you and how to cu-re it."

Ira Met-hu-en la-ug-hed. "Pull myself to-get-her? I am all in one pi-ece, I as-su-re you. And I've told you what's the mat-ter with me, as you put it. I ga-ve myself my own tre-at-ment. As for cu-ring it, I wo-uldn't tell you how even if I knew. I wo-uldn't gi-ve up my pre-sent con-di-ti-on for anyt-hing. I at last re-ali-ze that not-hing re-al-ly mat-ters, inc-lu-ding en-dow-ments. I shall be ta-ken ca-re of, and I will de-vo-te myself to amu-sing myself as I see fit."

Johnny had be-en ha-un-ting Co-ok's of-fi-ce all day. He way-la-id the pre-si-dent when the lat-ter re-tur-ned from the hos-pi-tal.

Cook told Johnny what had hap-pe-ned. He sa-id: "He se-ems to be comp-le-tely ir-res-pon-sib-le. We'll ha-ve to get in to-uch with his son, and ha-ve a gu-ar-di-an ap-po-in-ted. And we'll ha-ve to do so-met-hing abo-ut you, Johnny."

Johnny didn't re-lish the pros-pect of the "so-met-hing." He knew he had no le-gal sta-tus ot-her than that of a ta-med wild ani-mal. The fact that Met-hu-en tech-ni-cal-ly ow-ned him was his only pro-tec-ti-on if so-me-body to-ok a no-ti-on to sho-ot him du-ring be-ar-hun-ting se-ason. And he was not ent-hu-si-as-tic abo-ut Ralph Met-hu-en. Ralph was a very ave-ra-ge yo-ung scho-ol-te-ac-her wit-ho-ut his fat-her's sci-en-ti-fic acu-men or whim-si-cal hu-mor. Fin-ding Johnny on his hands, his re-ac-ti-on wo-uld be to gi-ve Johnny to a zoo or so-met-hing.

He put his paws on Miss Pres-cott's desk and as-ked: "Hey, go-od-ro-oking, wirr you cawr up Bru-ce Ing-re-hart at ze *Co-uri-er*?"

"Johnny," sa-id the pre-si-dent's sec-re-tary, "you get fres-her every day."

"Ze bad inf-ru-en-ce of ze un-derg-ra-du-ates. Wirr you cawr Mr. Ing-re-hart, be-a-uti-fur?" Miss Pres-cott, who was not, did so.

Bruce Ing-le-hart ar-ri-ved at the Phelps man-si-on to find Johnny ta-king a sho-wer. Johnny was al-so ma-king a hor-rib-le baw-ling no-ise. "*Wa-a-a-a-ai*" he how-led. "*Ho-o-o-o-o-o-oo! Ymrrrr! Wa-a-a-a-a-aa!*"

"Whatcha do-ing?" yel-led Ing-le-hart.

"Taking a bass," rep-li-ed Johnny. "*Wu-u-um-mh!*"

"Are you sick?"

"No. Jus' sin-ging in bass. Pe-op-le sing whi-re ta-king bass; why sho-uld'n't I? *Ya-a-a-a-awa-aa!*"

"Well, for Pe-te's sa-ke don't. It so-unds li-ke you we-re ha-ving yo-ur thro-at cut. What's the idea of the-se bath to-wels spre-ad all over the flo-or?"

"I show you." Johnny ca-me out of the sho-wer, lay down on the bath to-wels and rol-led. When he was mo-re or less dry, he sco-oped the to-wels up in his fo-re-paws and ho-ve them in-to a cor-ner. Ne-at-ness was not one of Johnny's strong po-ints.

He told Ing-le-hart abo-ut the Met-hu-en si-tu-ati-on. "Ro-ok he-re, Bru-ce," he sa-id, "I sink I can fix him, but you wirr ha-ve to he'p me."

"O.K. Co-unt me in."

Pop!

The or-derly lo-oked up from his pa-per. But no-ne of the but-tons sho-wed a light. So, pre-su-mably, no-ne of the pa-ti-ents, wan-ted at-ten-ti-on. He went back to his re-ading.

Pop!

It so-un-ded a lit-tle li-ke a bre-aking light bulb. The or-derly sig-hed, put away his pa-per, and be-gan prow-ling. As he ap-pro-ac-hed the ro-om of the mad pro-fes-sor, No. 14, he no-ti-ced a smell of lim-bur-ger.

Pop!

There was no do-ubt that the no-ise ca-me from No. 14. The or-derly stuck his he-ad in.

At one si-de of the ro-om sat Ira Met-hu-en. He held a cont-rap-ti-on ma-de of a length of glass rod and as-sor-ted wi-res. At the ot-her si-de of the ro-om, on the flo-or, lay a num-ber of crumbs of che-ese. A cock-ro-ach scut-tled out of the sha-dows and ma-de for the crumbs. Met-hu-en sigh-ted along his glass rod and pres-sed a but-ton. *Pop!* A flash, and the-re was no mo-re cock-ro-ach.

Methuen swung the rod to-ward the or-derly. "Stand back, sir! I'm Buck Ro-gers, and this is my di-sin-teg-ra-tor!"

"Hey," sa-id the or-derly fe-ebly. The old go-of might be crazy, but af-ter what hap-pe-ned to the ro-ach—He duc-ked out and sum-mo-ned a squ-ad of in-terns.

But the in-terns had no tro-ub-le with Met-hu-en. He tos-sed the cont-rap-ti-on on the bed, sa-ying:

“If I thought it matte-red, I’d raise a hell of a stink abo-ut cock-ro-ac-hes in a sup-po-sedly sa-ni-tary hos-pi-tal.”

One of the in-terns pro-tes-ted: “But I’m su-re the-re aren’t any he-re.”

“What do you call that?” as-ked Met-hu-en dryly, po-in-ting at the shat-te-red re-ma-ins of one of his vic-tims.

“It must ha-ve be-en at-trac-ted in from the out-si-de by the smell of that che-ese. *Phew!* Jud-son, cle-an up the flo-or. What is this, pro-fes-sor?” He pic-ked up the rod and the flash-light bat-tery at-tac-hed to it.

Methuen wa-ved a dep-re-ca-ting hand. “Not-hing im-por-tant. Just a lit-tle gad-get I tho-ught up. By ap-plying the right e.m.f. to pu-re crown glass, it’s pos-sib-le to ra-ise its in-dex of ref-rac-ti-on to a re-mar-kab-le deg-ree. The re-sult is that light stri-king the glass is so slo-wed up that it ta-kes we-eks to pass thro-ugh it in the or-di-nary man-ner. The light that is thus trap-ped can be re-le-ased by ma-king a small spark ne-ar the glass. So I simply lay the rod on the win-dow sill all af-ter-no-on to so-ak up sun-light, a part of which is re-le-ased by ma-king a spark with that but-ton. Thus I can sho-ot an ho-ur’s ac-cu-mu-la-ted light-energy out the front end of the rod in a very small frac-ti-on of a se-cond. Na-tu-ral-ly when this be-am hits an opa-que obj-ect, it ra-ises its tem-pe-ra-tu-re. So I’ve be-en amu-sing myself by lu-ring the ro-ac-hes in he-re and exp-lo-ding them. You may ha-ve the thing; its char-ge is abo-ut ex-ha-us-ted.”

The in-tern was stern. “That’s a dan-ge-ro-us we-a-pon. We can’t let you play with things li-ke that.”

“Oh, can’t you? Not that it mat-ters, but I’m only sta-ying he-re be-ca-use I’m ta-ken ca-re of. I can walk out any ti-me I li-ke.”

“No you can’t, pro-fes-sor. You’re un-der a tem-po-rary com-mit-ment for ob-ser-va-ti-on.”

“That’s all right, son. I still say I can walk out whe-ne-ver I fe-el li-ke it. I just don’t ca-re much whet-her I do or not.” With which Met-hu-en be-gan tu-ning the ra-dio by his bed, ig-no-ring the in-terns.

Exactly twel-ve ho-urs la-ter, at 10 a.m., Ira Met-hu-en’s ro-om in the hos-pi-tal was fo-und to be va-cant. A se-arch of the hos-pi-tal fa-iled to lo-ca-te him. The only clue to his di-sap-pe-a-ran-ce was the fact that his ra-dio had be-en di-sem-bo-we-led. Tu-bes, wi-res, and con-den-sers lay in un-tidy he-aps on the flo-or.

The New Ha-ven po-li-ce cars re-ce-ived inst-ruc-ti-ons to lo-ok for a tall, thin man with gray ha-ir and go-atee, pro-bably ar-med with de-ath rays, di-sin-teg-ra-tors, and all the ot-her ad-van-ced we-a-pons of fact and fic-ti-on.

For ho-urs they sco-ured the city with scre-aming si-rens. They fi-nal-ly lo-ca-ted the me-na-cing mad-man, sit-ting pla-cidly on a park bench three blocks from the hos-pi-tal and re-ading a news-pa-per. Far from re-sis-ting, he grin-ned at them and lo-oked at his watch. “Three ho-urs and forty-eight mi-nu-tes. Not bad, boys, not bad, con-si-de-ring how ca-re-ful-ly I hid myself.”

One of the cops po-un-ced on a bul-ge in Met-hu-en’s poc-ket. The bul-ge was ma-de by anot-her wi-re cont-rap-ti-on. Met-hu-en shrug-ged. “My hyper-bo-lic so-le-no-id. Gi-ves you a co-ni-cal mag-ne-tic fi-eld, and enab-les you to ma-ni-pu-la-te fer-ro-us obj-ects at a dis-tan-ce. I pic-ked the lock of the do-or to the ele-va-tors with it.”

When Bru-ce Ing-le-hart ar-ri-ved at the hos-pi-tal abo-ut fo-ur, he was told Met-hu-en was as-le-ep. That was amen-ded to the sta-te-ment that Met-hu-en was get-ting up, and co-uld see a vi-si-tor in a few mi-nu-tes. He fo-und Met-hu-en in a dres-sing gown.

Methuen sa-id: “Hel-lo, Bru-ce. They had me wrap-ped up in a wet she-et, li-ke a mummy. It’s swell for naps; re-la-xes you. I told ‘em they co-uld do it whe-ne-ver they li-ked. I think they we-re an-no-yed abo-ut my get-ting out.”

Inglehart was slightly em-bar-ras-sed.

Methuen sa-id: “Don’t worry; I’m not mad at you. I re-a-li-ze that not-hing mat-ters, inc-lu-ding re-sent-ments. And I’ve had a most amu-sing ti-me he-re. Just watch them fizz the next ti-me I es-ca-pe.”

“But don’t you ca-re abo-ut yo-ur fu-tu-re?” sa-id Ing-le-hart. “They’ll trans-fer you to a pad-ded cell at Mid-dle-town—”

Methuen wa-ved a hand. “That do-esn’t bot-her me. I’ll ha-ve fun the-re, too.”

“But how abo-ut Johnny Black, and Dalrymp-le’s en-dow-ment?”

“I don’t gi-ve a damn what hap-pens to them.”

Here the or-derly stuck his he-ad in the do-or bri-efly to check up on this unp-re-dic-tab-le pa-ti-ent. The hos-pi-tal, be-ing short-han-ded, was unab-ble to ke-ep a con-ti-nu-o-us watch on him.

Methuen con-ti-nu-ed: “Not that I don’t li-ke Johnny. But when you get a re-al sen-se of pro-por-ti-on, li-ke mi-ne, you re-ali-ze that hu-ma-nity is not-hing but a sort of skin di-se-ase on a ball of dirt, and that no ef-fort be-yond sub-sis-ten-ce, shel-ter, and ca-su-al amu-se-ment is worth whi-le. The Sta-te of Con-nec-ti-cut is wil-ling to pro-vi-de the first two for me, so I shall de-vo-te myself to the third. What’s that you ha-ve the-re?”

Inglehart tho-ught, “They’re right; he’s be-co-me a chil-dishly ir-res-pon-sib-le sci-en-ti-fic ge-ni-us.” Ke-eping his back to the do-or, the re-por-ter bro-ught out his fa-mily he-ir-lo-om: a big sil-ver poc-ket flask da-ting back to the fa-bu-lo-us pro-hi-bi-ti-on pe-ri-od. His aunt Mart-ha had left it to him, and he him-self ex-pec-ted to will it to a mu-se-um.

“Apricot brandy,” he mur-mu-red. Johnny had tip-ped him off to Met-hu-en’s tas-tes.

“Now, Bru-ce, that’s so-met-hing sen-sib-le. Why didn’t you bring it out so-oner, ins-te-ad of ma-king fu-ti-le ap-pe-als to my sen-se of duty?”

The flask was empty. Ira Met-hu-en spraw-led in his cha-ir. Now and then he pas-sed a hand ac-ross his fo-re-he-ad. He sa-id: “I can’t be-li-eve it. I can’t be-li-eve that I felt that way half an ho-ur ago. O Lord, what ha-ve I do-ne?”

“Plenty,” sa-id Ing-le-hart.

Methuen was not ac-ting at all drunk. He was full of so-ber re-mor-se.

“I re-mem-ber everyt-hing—tho-se in-ven-ti-ons that pop-ped out of my mind, everyt-hing. But I didn’t ca-re. How did you know al-co-hol wo-uld co-un-te-ract the Met-hu-en inj-ec-ti-on?”

“Johnny fi-gu-red it out. He lo-oked up its ef-fects, and dis-co-ve-red that in mas-si-ve do-ses it co-agu-la-tes the pro-te-ins in the ner-ve cells. He gu-es-sed it wo-uld lo-wer the-ir con-duc-ti-vity to co-un-te-ract the inc-re-ased con-duc-ti-vity thro-ugh the gaps bet-we-en them that yo-ur tre-at-ment ca-uses.”

“So,” sa-id Met-hu-en, “when I’m so-ber I’m drunk, and when I’m drunk I’m so-ber. But what’ll we do abo-ut the en-dow-ment—my new de-part-ment and the la-bo-ra-tory and everyt-hing?”

“I don’t know. Dalrymp-le’s le-aving to-night; he had to stay over a day on ac-co-unt of so-me trus-tee bu-si-ness. And they won’t let you out for a whi-le yet, even when they know abo-ut the al-co-hol co-un-ter-tre-at-ment. Bet-ter think of so-met-hing qu-ick, be-ca-use the vi-si-ting pe-ri-od is pretty ne-ar up.”

Methuen tho-ught. He sa-id: “I re-mem-ber how all tho-se in-ven-ti-ons work, tho-ugh I co-uldn’t pos-sibly in-vent any mo-re of them un-less I went back to the ot-her con-di-ti-on.” He shud-de-red. “The-re’s the soft-spe-aker, for ins-tan-ce—”

“What’s that?”

“It’s li-ke a lo-ud-spe-aker, only it do-esn’t spe-ak lo-udly. It throws a su-per-so-nic be-am, mo-du-la-ted by the hu-man vo-ice to gi-ve the ef-fect of audib-le so-und-fre-qu-en-ci-es when it hits the hu-man ear. Sin-ce you can throw a su-per-so-nic be-am al-most as ac-cu-ra-tely as you can throw a light be-am, you can turn the soft-spe-aker on a per-son, who will then he-ar a still small vo-ice in his ear ap-pa-rently co-ming from now-he-re. I tri-ed it on Du-gan one day. It wor-ked. Co-uld you do anyt-hing with that?”

“I don’t know. May-be.”

“I ho-pe you can. This is ter-rib-le. I tho-ught I was per-fectly sa-ne and ra-ti-onal. May-be I was—May-be not-hing is im-por-tant. But I don’t fe-el that way now, and I don’t want to fe-el that way aga-in—”

The om-nip-re-sent ivy, of which Ya-le is so pro-ud, af-fords splen-did hand-holds for clim-bing. Bru-ce Ing-le-hart, ke-eping an eye pe-eled for cam-pus cops, swar-med up the big to-wer at the cor-ner of Bing-ham Hall. Be-low, in the dark, Johnny wa-ited.

Presently the end of a clot-hes-li-ne ca-me dang-ling down. Johnny in-ser-ted the ho-ok in the end of the ro-pe lad-der in-to the lo-op in the end of the li-ne. Ing-le-hart ha-uled the lad-der up and se-cu-red it, wis-hing that he and Johnny co-uld chan-ge bo-di-es for a whi-le. That climb up the ivy had sca-red him and win-ded him badly. But he co-uld climb ivy and Johnny co-uld n't.

The lad-der cre-aked un-der Johnny's fi-ve hund-red po-unds. A few mi-nu-tes la-ter it slid slowly, jer-kily up the wall, li-ke a gi-ant cen-ti-pe-de. Then Ing-le-hart, Johnny, lad-der, and all we-re on top of the to-wer.

Inglehart got out the soft-spe-aker and tra-ined the te-les-co-pic sight on the win-dow of Dalrymp-le's ro-om in the Taft, ac-ross the in-ter-sec-ti-on of Col-le-ge and Cha-pel Stre-ets. He fo-und the yel-low rec-tang-le of light. He co-uld see in-to abo-ut half the ro-om. His he-art skip-ped a few be-ats un-til a stocky fi-gu-re mo-ved in-to his fi-eld of vi-si-on. Dalrymp-le had not yet left. But he was pac-king a co-up-le of su-it-ca-ses.

Inglehart slip-ped the trans-mit-ter clip aro-und his neck, so that the trans-mit-ter nest-led aga-inst his larynx. The next ti-me Dalrymp-le ap-pe-ared, Ing-le-hart fo-cu-sed the cros-sha-irs on the ste-el man's he-ad. He spo-ke: "Hans-com Dalrymp-le!" He saw the man stop sud-denly. He re-pe-ated: "Hans-com Dalrymp-le!"

"Huh?" sa-id Dalrymp-le. "Who the hell are you? Whe-re the hell are you?" Ing-le-hart co-uld not he-ar him, of co-ur-se, but he co-uld gu-ess.

Inglehart sa-id, in so-lemn to-nes: "I am yo-ur cons-ci-en-ce."

By now Dalrymp-le's agi-ta-ti-on was evi-dent even at that dis-tan-ce. Ing-le-hart con-ti-nu-ed: "Who squ-e-ezed out all the com-mon stock-hol-ders of Hep-ha-es-tus Ste-el in that phony re-or-ga-ni-za-ti-on?" Pa-use. "You did, Hans-com Dalrymp-le!"

"Who bri-bed a Uni-ted Sta-tes se-na-tor to swing the vo-te for a hig-her ste-el ta-riff, with fifty tho-usand dol-lars and a pro-mi-se of fifty tho-usand mo-re, which was ne-ver pa-id?" Pa-use. "You did, Hans-com Dalrymp-le!"

"Who pro-mi-sed Wen-dell Co-ok the mo-ney for a new bi-ophy-sics bu-il-ding, and then let his gre-ed get the bet-ter of him and bac-ked out on the thin ex-cu-se that the man who was to ha-ve he-aded the new de-part-ment had had a ner-vo-us bre-ak-down?" Pa-use, whi-le Ing-le-hart ref-lec-ted that "ner-vo-us bre-ak-down" was me-re-ly a ni-ce way of sa-ying "go-ne nuts." "You did, Hans-com Dalrymp-le!"

"Do you know what'll hap-pen to you if you don't ato-ne, Dalrymp-le? You'll be re-in-car-na-ted as a spi-der, and pro-bably ca-ught by a wasp and used as li-ve fod-der for her larvæ. How will you li-ke that, *heh-heh*?"

"What can you do to ato-ne? Don't be a sap. Call up Co-ok. Tell him you've chan-ged yo-ur mind, and are re-ne-wing yo-ur of-fer!" Pa-use. "Well, what are you wa-iting for? Tell him you're not only re-ne-wing it, but do-ub-ling it!" Pa-use. "Tell him—"

But at this po-int Dalrymp-le mo-ved swiftly to the te-lep-ho-ne. Ing-le-hart sa-id, "Ah, that's bet-ter, Dalrymp-le," and shut off the mac-hi-ne.

Johnny as-ked: "How did you know awr zo-se sings abo-ut him?"

"I got his be-li-ef in re-in-car-na-ti-on out of his obit down at the shop. And one of our rew-ri-te men who used to work in Was-hing-ton says every-body down the-re knows abo-ut the ot-her things. Only you can't print a thing li-ke that un-less you ha-ve evi-den-ce to back it up."

They lo-we-red the ro-pe lad-der and re-ver-sed the pro-cess by which they had co-me up. They gat-he-red up the-ir stuff and star-ted for the Phelps man-si-on. But as they ro-un-ded the cor-ner of Bing-ham they al-most ran in-to a fa-mi-li-ar stork-li-ke fi-gu-re. Met-hu-en was just set-ting up anot-her cont-rap-ti-on at the cor-ner of Welch.

"Hello," he sa-id.

Man and be-ar ga-ped at him. Ing-le-hart as-ked: "Did you es-ca-pe aga-in?"

"Uh-huh. When I so-be-red up and got my po-int of vi-ew back. It was easy, even tho-ugh they'd ta-ken my ra-dio away. I in-ven-ted a hypno-ti-zer, using a light bulb and a rhe-os-tat ma-de of wi-re from my mat-tress, and hypno-ti-zed the or-derly in-to gi-ving me his uni-form and ope-ning the do-ors for me. My, my, that was amu-sing."

"What are you do-ing now?" Ing-le-hart be-ca-me awa-re that Johnny's black pelt had mel-ted off in-to the dark-ness.

"This? Oh, I drop-ped aro-und ho-me and knoc-ked to-get-her an imp-ro-ved soft-spe-aker. This one'll work thro-ugh ma-sonry walls. I'm go-ing to put all the un-derg-ra-du-ates to sle-ep and tell 'em they're mon-keys. When they wa-ke up, it will be most amu-sing to see them run-ning aro-und on all fo-urs and scratc-hing and clim-bing the chan-de-li-ers. They're prac-ti-cal-ly mon-keys to be-gin with, so it sho-uld'n't be dif-fi-cult."

"But you can't, pro-fes-sor! Johnny and I just went to a lot of tro-ub-le get-ting Dalrymp-le to re-new his of-fer. You don't want to let us down, do you?"

"What you and Johnny do do-esn't mat-ter to me in the sligh-test. Not-hing mat-ters. I'm go-ing to ha-ve my fun. And don't try to in-ter-fe-re, Bru-ce." Met-hu-en po-in-ted anot-her glass rod at Ing-le-hart's mid-dle. "You're a ni-ce yo-ung fel-low, and it wo-uld be too bad if I had to let you ha-ve three ho-urs' ac-cu-mu-la-ti-on of sun-ray energy all at on-ce."

"But this af-ter-no-on you sa-id—"

"I know what I sa-id this af-ter-no-on. I was drunk and back in my old sta-te of mind, full of res-pon-si-bi-lity and cons-ci-en-ti-o-us-ness and such bunk. I'll ne-ver to-uch the stuff aga-in if it has that ef-fect on me. Only a man who has re-ce-ived the Met-hu-en tre-at-ment can ap-pre-ci-ate the fu-ti-lity of all hu-man ef-fort."

Methuen shrank back in-to the sha-dows as a co-up-le of un-derg-ra-du-ates pas-sed. Then he re-su-med work on his cont-rap-ti-on, using one hand and ke-eping Ing-le-hart co-ve-red with the ot-her. Ing-le-hart, not kno-wing what el-se to do, as-ked him qu-es-ti-ons abo-ut the mac-hi-ne. Met-hu-en res-pon-ded with a string of tech-ni-cal jar-gon. Ing-le-hart won-de-red des-pe-ra-tely what to do. He was not an outs-tan-dingly bra-ve yo-ung man, es-pe-ci-al-ly in the fa-ce of a gun or its equ-iva-lent. Met-hu-en's bony hand ne-ver wa-ve-red. He ma-de the adj-ust-ments on his mac-hi-ne mostly by fe-el.

"Now," he sa-id, "that ought to be abo-ut right. This con-ta-ins a to-nic met-ro-no-me that will send them a no-te of fre-qu-ency of 349 cycles a se-cond, with 68.4 pul-ses of so-und a mi-nu-te. This, for va-ri-o-us tech-ni-cal re-asons, has the ma-xi-mum hypno-tic ef-fect. From he-re I can ra-ke the col-le-ges along Col-le-ge Stre-et—" He ma-de a fi-nal adj-ust-ment. "This will be the most amu-sing joke yet. And the cre-am of it is that, sin-ce Con-nec-ti-cut is de-ter-mi-ned to con-si-der me in-sa-ne, they can't do anyt-hing to me for it! He-re go-es, Bru-ce—*Phew*, has so-me-body star-ted a still he-re, or what? I've be-en smel-ling and tas-ting al-co-hol for the last fi-ve mi-nu-tes—*ouch!*"

The glass rod ga-ve one daz-zling flash, and then Johnny's ha-iry black body ca-ta-pul-tered out of the dark-ness. Down went Ira Met-hu-en, all the wind knoc-ked out of him.

"Quick, Bru-ce!" bar-ked Johnny. "Pick up zat ne-ed-re spra-yer I drop-ped. Unsc-rew ze con-ta-iner on ze bot-tom. Don't spirr it. Zen co-me he-re and po-ur it down his sro-at!"

This was do-ne, with Johnny hol-ding Met-hu-en's jaws apart with his claws, li-ke Samp-son sla-ying the li-on, only con-ver-sely.

They wa-ited a few mi-nu-tes for the al-co-hol to ta-ke ef-fect, lis-te-ning for so-unds that they had be-en dis-co-ve-red. But the col-le-ges we-re si-lent sa-ve for the oc-ca-si-onal tick of a typew-ri-ter.

Johnny exp-la-ined: "I ran ho-me and got ze ne-ed-re spra-yer from his ro-om. Zen I got Webb, ze re-se-arch as-sis-tant in bi-ophy-sics, to ret me in ze ra-bo-ra-tory for ze ar-co-hor. Zen I try to sne-ak up and squ-irf a spray in his mo-use whi-re he talks. I get so-me in, but I don't get ze spra-yer adj-us-ted right, and ze spray hit him be-fo-re it bre-aks up, and stings him. I don't ha-ve fin-gers, you know. So we ha-ve to use what ze bo-oks cawr bru-te for-ce."

Methuen be-gan to show signs of nor-malcy. As wit-ho-ut his glass rod he was just a harm-less old

pro-fes-sor, Johnny let him up. His words tumb-led out: ‘T’m so glad you did, John-ny—you sa-ved my re-pu-ta-ti-on, may-be my li-fe. Tho-se fat-he-ads at the hos-pi-tal wo-uldn’t be-li-eve I had to be kept full of al-co-hol, so, of co-ur-se, I so-be-red up and went crazy aga-in—may-be they’ll be-li-eve now. Co-me on; let’s get back the-re qu-ickly. If they ha-ven’t dis-co-ve-red my ab-sen-ce, they might be wil-ling to ke-ep this last es-ca-pe qu-i-et. When they let me out, I’ll work on a per-ma-nent cu-re for the Met-hu-en tre-at-ment. I’ll find it, if I don’t die of sto-mach ul-cers from all the al-co-hol I’ll ha-ve to drink.’

Johnny wad-dled up Temp-le Stre-et to his ho-me, fe-eling rat-her smug abo-ut his abi-lity as a fi-xer. May-be Met-hu-en, so-ber, was right abo-ut the fu-ti-lity of it all. But if such a phi-lo-sophy led to the up-set-ting of Johnny’s ple-asant exis-ten-ce, Johnny pre-fer-red Met-hu-en drunk.

He was glad Met-hu-en wo-uld so-on be well and co-ming ho-me. Met-hu-en was the only man he had any sen-ti-men-tal re-gard for. But as long as Met-hu-en was shut up, Johnny was go-ing to ta-ke ad-van-ta-ge of that fact. When he re-ac-hed the Phelps man-si-on, ins-te-ad of go-ing di-rectly in, he thrust a fo-re-leg aro-und be-hind the hed-ge next to the wall. It ca-me out with a hu-ge slab of che-wing to-bac-co. Johnny bit off abo-ut half the slab, thrust the rest back in its cac-he, and went in, dro-oling hap-pily a lit-tle at each step. Why not?

* * *

First Pub-lis-hed in As-to-un-ding Sci-en-ce Fic-ti-on ma-ga-zi-ne, No-vem-ber 1940

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